

News Release

U of M Crookston's Rhett Johnson Recognized for Distinguished Scholarship and Research

By Dan Svedarsky, Elizabeth Tollefson on Monday, January 8, 2007

Rhett Johnson teaches plant taxonomy, general ecology and wetland ecology and management at UMC.



CROOKSTON, Minn. (January 8, 2007) – Rhett Johnson, adjunct professor and restoration ecologist at the University of Minnesota Crookston (UMC), was recognized recently for outstanding research by the Graduate School at the University of Minnesota. His master’s thesis was nominated as the runner up to represent the University in a competition for the 2006 Distinguished Master's Thesis Award.

Nominations for the award come from member institutions of the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools which recognizes distinguished scholarship and research at the master's level. Johnson's thesis entitled, "Peatland Trees and Hydrology: A Dendrochronological Examination of Black Spruce and Tamarack Growth and Associated Hydrology in a Peatland in Marshall County, Minnesota," was announced as the University of Minnesota's runner-up nomination by Gail Dubrow, vice provost and dean at the U of M graduate school.

Johnson conducted his study in the wilderness area at the Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge north of Thief River Falls, Minn. His research, known as dendroecology, focused on the effects of water table changes on the health of peatland spruce and tamarack trees through the study of the annual growth rings of trees. Johnson also examined the relative effects of competition and water table depth on the diameter growth of peatland trees.

David Schimpf, Ph.D., associate professor of biology at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, served as Johnson’s thesis advisor. According to Schimpf, "Rhett's findings have wide geographic relevance, and they will be useful for wetland management in relation to risen water tables that stem from road building, beaver activity or rapid shifts in climate. He conceived and planned this research then carried it out under conditions that were extremely demanding physically. Rhett also took the initiative to obtain advice from world authorities in dendroecology."

Johnson's appointment at UMC is funded jointly by UMC and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). He teaches plant taxonomy, general ecology and wetland ecology and management. With his NRCS assignment, Johnson is evaluating the success of wetland restorations conducted at the Glacial Ridge Project east of Crookston, Minn. Glacial Ridge is the largest prairie and wetland restoration project in North America and where the NRCS has invested in several thousand acres of wetlands through the Wetlands Reserve Program.

Within UMC's Natural Resources Department, majors include; natural resources management, wildlife management, water resource management, park management, natural resources law enforcement, natural resources aviation, law enforcement aviation, environmental landscaping, production horticulture and golf and turf management. For more information, contact Judy Baatz at 218-281-8128 (jbbaatz@umn.edu) or Svedarsky at 218-281-8129 (dsvedars@umn.edu).

The University of Minnesota Crookston (UMC) delivers more than 24 different undergraduate degree programs, including online options, in agriculture; arts, humanities and social sciences; business; math, science and technology; and natural resources. UMC is dedicated to helping students and the region aim higher, reach further and dream big dreams. To learn more, visit www.UMCrookston.edu.

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